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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: GUNMEN STORM UVIRA PRISON AND FREE PRISONERS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Samuel V. Brock for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Both MONUC and press articles report that gunmen stormed the central prison in Uvira (in South Kivu, across Lake Tanganyika from Bujumbura) in the early morning hours of April 9, freeing over 200 prisoners in the process. MONUC reported that the gunmen were identified as fighters from the Mai Mai Zabuloni group and the Burundian rebel group FNL (Note: formerly Palipehutu-FNL, the group recently dropped the prefix "Palipehutu" from their name during peace negotiations with the GoB. End note). MONUC also noted that the group staged a simultaneous attack on the home of an FARDC officer, though he was not hurt. The reason for the attack reportedly was to free a number of FNL cadre who were jailed last week, the FNL having sought assistance from Mai Mai Zabuloni to carry out the raid.

¶2. (U) A Reuters press report written by a Kinshasa-based journalist quoted Uvira's territorial administrator as saying that the fighters, who were armed with machine guns and rocket propelled grenades, attacked several parts of the town at once, and that they had come to free some prisoners. He said that three of the gunmen, one FARDC soldier, and a female civilian were killed during the attack. The article also quoted a local journalist as saying that the gunmen were suspected to be FNL cadre associated with a local Mai Mai group.

¶3. (SBU) However, two local contacts tell a different story. According to an NGO official based in Bukavu, it was Banyamulenge (ethnic Tutsi from South Kivu) from the 112th non-integrated brigade (belonging to Patrick Masunzu of the 10th military region) who attacked the prison, aiming to free some of their compatriots, and that local Mai Mai actually intervened to try to stop them.

¶4. (SBU) Separately, a local journalist in Uvira provided us with two other versions of events. One, which he claims to be the local official account (and with which he disagrees), is that a recently integrated Mai Mai commander was unhappy with his FARDC rank and decided to attack Uvira in retaliation. The journalist, however, said that the person in question had never belonged to the Mai Mai, had no reason to attack the prison, and that the bodies of the dead gunmen, which he said were six in number, "appeared" Tutsi and were wearing military uniforms (Note: The implication is that it was indeed Banyamulenge soldiers who carried out the attack. Also, a local FARDC officer said the shootout ended with 12 persons dead -- eight assailants, two soldiers, one policeman, and a female civilian. End note).

¶5. (C) Comment: It is difficult at this point to ascertain which version of events is what really happened. If in fact the FNL and/or Mai Mai are the culprits, the prospects for

disarmament are not reassuring. We will continue to follow
this story. End comment.
BROCK